



News Release

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Child Health Day Tips to Improve Your Family's Future

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The latest data from the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) show that 21.5% of children in Utah are at an unhealthy weight. At every grade, more boys than girls are at an unhealthy weight. Between 3rd and 5th grades, the percentage of Utah students at an unhealthy weight increased dramatically. What can be done to influence our children's health?

October 6, 2008 is National Child Health Day and UDOH is offering suggestions to families to start making positive changes now to affect the future health of their children.

Following are ideas parents can use to help children eat healthy and get enough exercise.

- 1) Set a good example. Don't just say it, do it! If parents enjoy eating healthy foods and being active, their children will likely follow in their foot steps.
- 2) Help your kids get active. Add an hour of physical activity into your child's daily routine. Incorporate an exercise plan that involves your whole family, such as walking, biking, or going to a park to play.
- 3) Limit television watching to less than two hours per day. By limiting TV time and video game playing, your child will become more active. Keep television out of children's rooms.
- 4) Encourage healthy eating habits. Plan a healthy menu and buy what's on your list. Include more fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods. Your child needs time to eat a healthy breakfast every day. Substitute soft drinks and other sweet beverages with fat-free or low fat milk at meals, and lots of water. Know how much food your child needs to eat.

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- 5) Make meal time family time. Children eat more fruits and vegetables and are more likely to be at a healthy weight, when a family eats dinner together at home. Turn off the TV and enjoy the time talking about your day.

As you incorporate healthier food choices for your children and your entire family, don't forget to explain why the change is important. As you reduce TV time, be sure to communicate that it is not a punishment but rather a time to become more active. Allow children to become involved in planning meals by letting them pick some healthy foods at the grocery store or writing them on the grocery list.

For more information visit the Utah Department of Health's Web site at www.health.utah.gov/obesity.

For information on National Child Health Day visit: <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/childhealthday>

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.